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## SERMON XIV.

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### DEISM AND CHRISTIANITY COMPARED.

"—ye believe in God, believe also in me."—ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL, 14: 1.

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also," was the declaration of the Savior to the faithless ones, and when he said of himself, "I came forth from the Father," he announced a truth full of promise to the world. The human mind, in its strivings after the things which are above itself, has made some strange exhibitions of its own capacities, but upon no subject has this strangeness been more wonderfully manifested, than upon that subject which includes the being and the attributes of God. Were it my task to illustrate that awful contradiction in human nature, which at one time proves man to be crazy, and at another time sane, I should appeal, in the first place, to what has been written and spoken concerning the Deity. True it is, that if the world contained no other proof of the great fact of the fall, man carries within him proof enough, and the denial of that proof is only another form of witnessing to the fact. In the away and mo-

tion of this disjointed being, we read the story of transgression, and when we see how the life here is all conflict with itself, how the parts have turned against, and are acting against one another, the conclusion comes without the seeking, that man was not sent forth in such a form from the hand of God.

And again, in view of what man proves himself to be, we hardly wonder that some should take up the notion that God had little to do with his creation—that man had no higher parentage than accident, and has no better destiny than fate. This conclusion, having in it more of the bitter than the other, would have a stronghold, and a wide empire, were it not for those wonderful evidences which prove man's immortality to himself, thus struggling with and destroying the supposition that man was the child of chance.

It remains, therefore, after these centuries of speculation, that no theory harmonizes with experience like the theory of the fall of man—that man was made upright, but did afterwards transgress, and that the struggle which ever since he has maintained is a struggle between that original purity and power, and that after sin and weakness. This accounts for the crosses and the contradictions of his nature, the knowledge and the ignorance, the power and the weakness, the truth and the error, the wisdom and the folly, which alternate so wonderfully in his life, and struggle together in the character.

We have spoken of man's natural views of the divine Being—views grounded upon the testimony of the things without, and the things within—nature, and conscience, and experience all pouring in a testimony to the being and the greatness of the one Invisible. It is true, moreover, that this testimony led those who had no other, to do just what the text asserts—to "believe in God," not always with a true apprehension of his character, but, at the same time, with a fixedness of belief in his existence and presence, which redeems heathenism from some of its absurdities, and which saved man from certain forms of sin.

It may be that the words of the text were first spoken to those who believed in God as he was revealed to the Jew, and that the Savior invites them to believe in him, even as they believed in the God of Abraham and of the Prophets. The faith, too, in himself, to the exercise of which he urges them, was then to do a comforting work, and hence he says: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me." He had told them that he was to go away and that they would see him no more; and perhaps, in view of this teaching, the reasoning of the passage is this: "Ye believe in God although he is invisible, and when I also pass into that invisible state, you must believe in me then, even as ye believe in God now. The same laws which apply to the Father in his invisible existence, must be applied to me, after

I am taken from the world, and then, you must believe in me, although invisible, even as now ye believe in him."

We propose, as our remarks would indicate, to give a broader sense to the words, and to draw from them this proposition, namely, those who believe in God should, for the same reasons, believe in Jesus Christ. This is the point to which we ask your attention.

We proceed then to remark, that there are many persons living in Christian communities, whose religion, so far as they have any, consists in an acknowledgment of the being, the attributes, and the providence of God. They believe that there is a God—that he has power over them, and over all things, that he is infinite in wisdom, and goodness, and knowledge, and truth—that they are his subjects now, and must account to him at the last. They have also some idea of what he will reward, and what he will punish; that his friendship is worth the having, and that in his frown there is a curse. They have reached these truths, as they think, by the light of nature—they are truths which, they say, conscience sanctions and reason approves, and these are the great truths of that natural religion upon which they rest to the exclusion of the religion which is revealed. It will be seen that the Deist occupies a position between the Atheist and the Christian—the Atheist believing in no God at all, and the Christian believing in God, not merely as he is manifested in nature, but as he lives and speaks in the person of his Son. Now, as a mere point to reason from, Atheism is certainly better than Deism, if it be the object of both to overthrow Christianity. Atheism, by its wide-sweeping negation, carries down Christianity, because it takes every thing else along with it; it leaves you without a point upon which to rest; as exterminating as the two philosophers, whom Pope in his line has helped to make immortal in spite of themselves, one of them denying the existence of the body, and the other the existence of the soul, so that, between the two, there was not much of man left to reason about. Such is the remorseless sweep of Atheism, and it can do more by the simple power of denial, than any thing else with which we are acquainted. The position of the Deist relatively to Christianity, is one far more assailable, and far more difficult to hold. One reason for this is, that the proof by which the Deist demonstrates the truth of his position, is the very proof by which we demonstrate the truth of Christianity. The chain of evidence runs in parallel lines; nay, the two chains so cross and interlock with one another, that one can not be broken without breaking the other. Hence the position of him who attempts to hold together the one, while he himself is striking at the links of the other, is a position of difficulty.

If the Deist does any thing more than assume the being, the attributes, and the providence of God—if he believes in God because he has proved all that he believes—then there is not a point in

that proof which does not bear directly upon the claims of Christianity. It may be true that many who confess God in nature, but deny him in revelation, confess him upon a kind of wholesale evidence which they have never analyzed, and do not half understand. They behold the great work of life, and conclude that this life must have had a parentage; they look over the gorgeous wealth of creation, and infer that here are the scatterings of a treasury that can never fail; the path of the planet through the heavens, and the poise of the insect upon the flower, are both lessons upon God, which it is much easier to receive than to reject. To deny God—why, this is to deny ourselves; and then, says the reasoner, from the nature of his work we infer the nature of his character, and upon this ladder we climb until we reach the throne of the Almighty, and see him as he is.

But now, what fact in nature ever proved the unity of God, and how know you, that in place of this one throne, and this one Deity upon it, there may not be many thrones, and many gods, each with subjects, and each with empires of his own? You talk of the oneness of God, and reason from it as a certain and admitted truth, but when did nature prove that, and where is the demonstration? The heathen knew as much, aside from revelation, as you know upon this point, and they settled upon the conclusion that there was a plurality of gods; and what argument or proof can you bring from nature, to prove that they were wrong and that you are right? Nay, what means this conflict that is going on in the world—the conflict of truth with falsehood, right with might, good with evil; and what less is it, in its sweep and power, than the great battle of the gods, each contending for mastery and for empire? Would one god thus war with himself—thus permit his own laws to contend with one another, and his own territory to be the scene of strife?

The truth is, that the Deist has not a single reason for believing in the unity of God, aside from those which he has unconsciously borrowed from revelation. All these notions concerning truth, and morality, and conscience, and Deity, which men term their religion, and by way of excellence "the religion of reason," a faith which they set against revelation and call it enough, is, in truth, but an off-shoot from the Word; it never did, and never can prove itself. This is the position of one who professes to believe in God while he rejects the Gospel of his Son; he has not an argument for his own faith which is not stronger in its testimony to that which he rejects, than to that which he admits.

Now as to the evidence which proves the creed of the Deist—not in that which it denies, but in that which it affirms—there is not a point in that evidence which does not prove Christianity just as conclusively as it proves Deism. If the latter is true, the former is true—the evidence which reveals the Father reveals also



the Son. What fact in nature, illustrating any one of the attributes of the Father, that has not its parallel in the history of the Son—existence, knowledge, power, works, all are godlike in the Son, even as they are in the Father. We may, indeed, dispute the record, and affirm that the testimony of our senses is far more reliable than the testimony of these witnesses—that we see and know ourselves of the Father, while the knowledge of the Son comes to us through history. But we meet this objection by asking, What certainty attaches to the evidence of our senses that did not attach to the senses of these men of a distant day, and why, if there were deception or mistake then, may there not be both also now? The testimony has to us all the force of experience, and the facts which it affirms are as reliable as any thing within our own observation. When, then, the Deist professes to believe in one god, and to rest his belief upon evidence, while at the same time he rejects revelation, he thereby places himself in a most involved position, because his own proofs carry revelation along with them; the very line of argument which proves what he believes proves also what he rejects, and if the argument be not good for both it is not good for either.

The world, in its wondrous powers, asserts and proves its divine origin, and when we ask if wonders quite as great did not cluster about the birth and about the cradle of Christianity, the question is its own evidence, it answers itself. The world is wondrous in its history, and what but wonders have made up the story of our faith from the beginning until now? If, therefore, creation in its origin and in its history proves the being and the parentage of God, redemption, in its origin and in its history, proves the same; the other could no more have taken form and life without God than the one. Indeed, I would as soon assume the task of proving that man made the world, as that man made Christianity; and I could as readily tell you how human powers wrought for the hanging of the sun in the heavens, and for the sending forth of this earth upon her journey, as for the production of that which was manifest in the life and in the person of the Son of God. If we hold both to the strict line of demonstration, one without God is as incomprehensible as the other, while human powers are inadequate for the production of either result.

But we come to a second consideration. It is manifest, after all that may be said, that the Deist finds but little use for his reason in the shaping of his creed. Passion, and desire, and wickedness are the things which give form and substance to his opinions. He imagines that he is better off, that he has higher and better chances under the religion of Deism, than under the religion of Christianity. He imagines that there is less of punishment implied and asserted in the system of nature than in that of grace; that there is more liberty of sinning and less danger from its con-

sequences. Indeed, the threats of Christianity are his strong reasons for not believing in it. But in this case his passion is as wrong as was his reason in the other. Christianity is a better friend to him, even in his sin, than Deism. In his blindness he clings to the system which is most against him, he flies to the refuge of a rock which will fall upon him and grind him to powder. Deism, is in fact, Christianity, with all its threats and with none of its promises; it is law without Gospel, judgment without mercy. It makes us conscious of sin without opening the way of escape; it preaches of our immortality, and we fear lest that should be our curse while all around this horizon are hanging clouds and muttering thunders, making life an awful thing to one who sees it as it is. The fear of the Deist, if in truth he lives upon his creed, predominates over his hopes; the very mysteries and uncertainties of his state and destiny induce those anxious forebodings, which are known to all, as among the darkest of human sorrows.

It is not the man who stands in the pulpit who alone preaches of judgment and of punishment, neither are these laws and consequences which attach especially to the Christian system; there are preachers within us whose sermons we must hear, and these things are in the Bible of nature as well as in the Book of grace. To suppose that we escape the threat and the fear of punishment by denying the authority of the Bible, is simply one great mistake. There is punishment in natural religion as surely as in the revealed, and we can as readily banish from the latter as from the former. The distinction at this point between the religion of nature and that of the Bible, is, not that the latter threatens while the former does not, but that the religion of nature is a religion of judgment without mercy, while the Bible can not warn of danger without pointing to the refuge.

Natural religion is like the cataract at midnight and in a storm—the awful rush and the dull thunder of the falling waters blending with the howl of the winds, and the black drapery of the darkness; a picture that of relentless power, going forward without sight or hearing to do its work of death. And what shall we say of that same cataract when, in the still day of summer, the sun rests upon its waters and transforms the terrible into the beautiful, when the timid flower leans over its verge, and lives in the baptism of its spray, when that bow of heaven watches around the flood like a spirit, now sleeping upon the foam bubbles at its base, now climbing the sheet of silver, and resting midway in its ascent, and now poising upon the edge of the fall, and lending its prism to the drops as they hurry into unknown depths, thus playing with the stern and awful as if love had triumphed over power!

What shall we say of this but that this is a picture of God, when in wrath he remembered mercy, when, over the hurrying waters of punishment he placed the bow of pardon, and told us not

to tremble as we looked upon the rushing tide! Oh! the believer in a mere natural religion, where he finds one thing to inspire hope, finds many things to inspire fear; the actings of his reason and of his conscience are toward the terrible, and he looks into eternity with a solemn awe, not knowing the things which shall befall him there. The effort to escape the idea of punishment by a rejection of the teachings of the Bible, is simply self-destructive, for punishment enters as certainly into the creed of the Deist as into the creed of the Christian, while with the Christian there is a hope and promise of which the other has none. To the natural man come warnings of wrath and signs of judgment which he can no more beat back than he could the in-rushing tide of ocean. He knows that there is punishment somewhere, for he feels it in his daily life, and he has secret prophecies which are as dark as the shadow of the grave. Why, this notion of punishment was as firmly rooted in the minds of men before the Scriptures were known, as it is now—the Bible did not originate it—the Bible did not declare it as new truth, it did but reaffirm it, and give shape, and precision, and authority thereto. The new truth of the Bible is nearly all love and mercy; here is the burden of its revelation, not punishment, because punishment was revealed before, and hence the mission of the Savior was one of salvation. Oh! the world knew and groaned under the knowledge, that the curse was upon itself; it did not want a revelation to tell that, for human misery voiced that lesson in its cries, and death looked it from its fixed eye until the demonstration rose into awfulness. That for which the earth pleaded, in the low wail of its sorrowing population, was something quite different from this.

The stifled voice of the weepers as it rose in broken accents from the misery in which it had its birth—the cry which entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth—was a cry for help. It was a cry for some way of escape, and when the Son of God heard that cry, and saw that none save himself could answer it, he said to the spirits who waited about his throne: "Lo, I come." He did come, and there in the volume of the book where all is written of Him, are treasured his sayings and his acts. He came—not to make more certain the punishment, for that was certain enough before—but to show us a way of escape. To open this way did he travail in the greatness of his strength; he laid hands upon the bolts and fastenings which frowned upon us, and wrenching them from their holdings, said to the captives: "Go forth." His great work was one of deliverance, a work of mercy and of love. He came "to seek and to save that which was lost," and here is the distinction between his system and the religion of nature; the one is redeeming and saving in its principles, while the other promises nothing but judgment and condemnation. Here is the fullness and the

glory of God in the Son—that in the Son, God is revealed in his mercy and in his love.

What a foolish and fatal struggle is ours when we resist and reject this scheme of salvation which brings hope, and hold to another revelation which has none. It takes us up at the very place where natural religion leaves us—and that place is sad and dark—and conducts us on into a region of promise and of hope. It has threats, and fears, and punishments, but it has something more with them, and we affirm that to reject it because these are in it, and hold to another system which has nothing but these, is a folly which verges upon madness. This is the folly of the Deist, and here is the reason why, if the mortal has hope in God, he must obey the injunction of the text: "Ye believe in God, believe also in me;" and here, too, quite at the close of our remarks, we touch the very feeling which the words of the text, as first spoken, were intended to produce. They were spoken as words of comfort: "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me."

The stern attributes of the Deity which nature declares and proves, are balanced by those milder attributes which are revealed in the Son; the judgment and the justice of the one being tempered by the mercy and the love of the other. And yet, in the rejection of the Son, men seek a refuge for themselves as sinners, while here, in the Son, is their stronghold in the day of wrath. The religion which tells of pardon and forgiveness, is not the religion of nature but the religion of the cross; the system that should be rejected on account of the terrors which it preaches, and the doom to which it sternly points, is that to which men hold as a substitute for Christianity. The darkness which of old was upon the nations was a darkness full of terror; in the uncertainties of that night, men pictured forms more awful than we see in dreams, and now all that the Bible says, is little more than the re-affirming of truths which nature was the first to utter. The light which Christianity threw aslant that darkness, when its ray rested like a belt of fire upon the night, was a light which, while it disclosed dangers, also revealed a way of escape. The shadows, as they moved before its power, rolled away like a curtain, that had shaded mighty things, and there in the dimness stood a cross, with a man stretched upon it, a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Here was the picture and the fullness of redemption, and about this cross-scene gathered promises which were to abide after the passing away of the heavens and the earth.

Thus far, not one jot or tittle has failed; these promises are now in the course of fulfillment, and they tell you how, in the midst of wrath, you may find mercy. Why reject God's word because it speaks of danger, when it has power to save from those dangers, this being its great design?

The dangers are revealed, that with the more earnestness you may hasten to the refuge, and we now say that the danger must remain whether you receive the Gospel or reject it. Contend not, then, with the best and truest friend that you will ever know—the only system of truth that has a hope for every fear, and for every peril a way of escape.

"Ye believe in God," the devils also believe and tremble, and that because, while they know the power of his wrath, they have no hope in his mercy. And what will a belief in God avail you more than them, if it reaches not to God in Christ, and fixes its grasp upon the great truths of redemption? Oh! we know too much of God already, as he reveals himself out of Christ, for pain, and misery, and death are solemn teachers, proving that there is judgment here, and pointing to a judgment to come. God, in the Son, supplies us with another kind of knowledge, a knowledge whose relation to the other is like that of joy to sorrow, like that of life to death.

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## SERMON XV.

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### GOD'S ESTIMATE OF THE VALUE OF MAN.

"LET no man seek his own, but every man another's welfare."—1 Cor. 10: 24.

I CAN taste no refreshment until this earth shall own the sway of its Redeemer!—was the exclamation of one of the best minds of the day. His fervent desire was fixed upon the moral progress of the race. It was his ruling desire. Other minds are intent on the same grand object, minds that seem to show no affinity for the doctrines of Christianity. They would have the elevation of man and the amelioration of society without Christianity, perhaps in opposition to its entire system. They allege that Christianity is in the way of human progress, and that if the world ever arrives at that great ideal, it must be by the gradual development of the race according to its present principles, and according to its present progress. To illustrate their theory, they say that the whole history of the race in the past may be compared to a colossal man whose life reaches from the creation to the last limits of time. The successive generations of men are the days of his life. The discov-



eries and inventions which characterize the different epochs of the world's history are his works. The creeds, opinions, doctrines, and principles of the successive ages are his thoughts. The state of society are his manners. He grows in knowledge and self-control and in visible size as we do, and his education is in the same way and for the same reasons similar to ours. And this, they further add, is not a mere figure, but a compendious statement of a very comprehensive fact, a power whereby the present gathers itself in the past.

If this ingenious representation were true, that colossal man at the present must be a being of hugely misshapen growth, and of exceedingly irregular proportions, and of a habitude that can doze through centuries. Akin to the injustice of all such dreamers, they first borrow their fundamental principles from the Scriptures, and then turn round to demolish the magazine whence they are taken. The probability is sufficiently strong that the idea of moral progress, as little as the doctrine of redemption, would never have entered the human mind had it not been first disclosed in the Scriptures. Still candor forces us to admit that with a system so perfect and so powerful as Christianity has proved itself to be, with its sublime principles, its benign spirit, its grand remedial provisions, its high reformatory character, and all depending for their efficient influence upon a divine agency, the mystery is as dark as it is painful, that so many centuries have been permitted to elapse and yet the human race is still left to groan under accumulated miseries. War rages as fiercely as ever it did, oppression holds down its victim, wrong and injustice walk arm in arm, ignorance sits beneath its dark cloud, vice strikes its roots deep in the soil of social life, idolatry nails its idol to the niche, governments riot in corruption, and sorrow, suffering, and tears are still the sad lot of man. The expected age for which the yearning creation has looked for centuries, seems, if coming at all, only its dawn. No Christian nation has yet become the land of Beulah, no sun of sevenfold splendor illumines the smallest section of christendom. Justice is nowhere established, our courts of law are mere lotteries, our governments yet uncleansed from heathen vices. The full, clear, high-principled nature of the Gospel has not been brought to bear upon the masses with any thing like the might of its beneficence. Still, with these sad admissions, it must be acknowledged that there is sufficient power in the Gospel to satisfy man's highest anticipations and to answer the largest demands of the world. There is enough for the removal of all human ills, and the promotion of the highest human welfare. The text contains the element of power that can effect it all. In announcing it you have all doubtless perceived that I have substituted the word welfare for the word wealth. My reason for the change is simply this: in the text there is no substantive expressed, but

simply the neuter article. By casting the eye along the chapter we find that the name and article (*το συμμερον*) occur together in the last verse. All we do is to substitute that in the place of the word wealth, which is not so expressive, and which strongly disagrees with the context. The text is thrown into the discussion of the subject of the chapter as a general principle whose spirit is fundamental of all moral progress.

I. The first truth which it presents to our consideration is that it fairly expresses God's estimate of the value of man.

The evidence of his regard for man gleams on almost every page of the Bible. It appears in the rich array of means intended for his instruction and development, and in the still richer and more wondrous provision made to exalt him to dignity and honor. Redemption is God's highest practical testimony to the worth of man, and yet redemption itself is only the grand means of leading him back to benevolence. The text contains in itself the essence of every moral precept, and therefore embodies most fully God's estimate of man. Herein he expresses the strength of his desire for the highest welfare of man, by calling into requisition the activity and entire influence of every man in aid of the welfare of every other man, and in default of the duty, places in forfeit his individual happiness. Basing the value of man on his original nature, and not on his present character, he makes it the duty of the race to seek the well-being of one as if the one were the race. The spirit of the precept seems to run in this tenor: that whenever the higher good of one man demands it, each one of the race shall voluntarily surrender his own welfare rather than impair or injure his. In its practical operation the principle is the same as if God should collect the race around him, and selecting one man from the exceeding multitude, should elevate him in the sight and presence of all, and there laying his command upon all, should forbid all wrong or injury to be done him, and enjoin, with kind and benevolent authority, that each should care for his welfare with the same constant and tender solicitude as if he held his own welfare in trust only for him; and then in return for the duty should make each one of that exceeding multitude the object of the same universal regard and attention. It binds the race together in such a chain of dependence, that if a single link be flawed or broken, the strength of the whole will be weakened, and the invisible current of influence intended to pass through every portion either destroyed or interrupted. The connection is so close that if a single man be benefited, the race is benefited in him; and if a single man be injured or degraded, the whole are degraded in his individual degradation. The value and place of every member corresponds to the value and place of every dependent link. The subtile current which goes from one passes through

all, whether for good or for evil. The principle of the text, then, does not barely accord to every man his individual natural and moral rights. It does more; it makes those rights the foundation of good to the race, and each one responsible for their preservation and influence.

Were man to value man according to this divine standard, the world would be advanced to a higher state of progress than it has ever witnessed. It is by departing from this standard and erecting one of their own, that they contrive to lower the true estimate of humanity and aid in building the tower of the world's miseries. In place of regarding the elevation of man as the great aim of his exertion and labors, his object has been to depress and degrade him to the lowest possible scale of value. His measure of human value is strength of muscle, industrial skill, general utility, the amount he can earn, or the quantity of labor he can perform. God takes into account his high moral nature, his immortality of being, his grand capacities, the effect of his endless influence through the long line of his endless being. God would raise man to what he may be, and can be, by calling out the right use of his various powers, and the power of all other resources in his behalf.

The text, therefore, is God's practical estimate of human value. It stands out more fully than a distinct or formal affirmation. Its language is so plain that it can not well be mistaken, while its spirit is the vital element of all moral elevation and progress. The whole is so clear, so just, so reasonable, that it seems to me, if the voice of the divine Redeemer were to break in upon the stillness of this assembly, and in its mild authoritative tones designate the name of some individual in the midst of us; and then in tones of equal tenderness and authority enjoin upon each to unite our efforts in seeking his highest temporal and eternal welfare, it would not be so strong and certain a proof of his regard for man as he has here given in this divine fundamental enactment which he has instituted for the guidance of human conduct for all time and through eternity. No miracle could be a stronger attestation of his estimate of man than he has expressed in establishing it as the fixed and immutable law of his kingdom.

Some, in their endeavors to exalt the value of man, have supposed that it would have been well worthy of the Creator, if he had called into being this great fabric of the universe, and continued it forever, simply for the purpose of instructing a single immortal mind. Were the supposition well substantiated, we do not see how it could be a higher proof of God's estimate of man than he has given in the principle of the text. To make immortal minds the aiders and instructors of immortal minds in the use of their reciprocal and collective influence, and that under the highest principle of their nature, binding them in everlasting bonds of affection to one another, is certainly something so much higher than

the mere tuition of material nature, as to make the supposition almost vanish from consideration. Such, then, is the exalted condition under which men are born, that this great law of kindness stands ready to meet us as soon as we enter the precincts of life. God has engraven it on our very constitution; nay, he has engraven it on the very constitution of the universe. It encircles us with its kind embrace wherever we are; it leads us by its kind direction wherever we go. It is the divine warrant of our safe conduct through life, in which men are notified beforehand, as soon as we take our place among them, that they shall care for our welfare as they care for their own. God so prizes and exalts our nature that he commands the world to do it service.

II. The principle of the text does more: it augments the value of man in all the powers of his nature.

It does so from its very nature. Disinterestedness is the prime element of manhood. It is the fine gold of human character, the sole essence of moral value. Selfishness is deterioration and debasement, the mere dross of human nature. Short-sighted in view and limited in its range of vision, it sees all objects out of their true relation, and reversed in their proper value. What God exalts and prizes, selfishness lowers and degrades. What God despises and contemns, selfishness exalts and prizes. It contradicts the unerring judgment of God, and so blind and obstinate is it, that rather than see in the light which he has kindled it will either bandage or dig out the eyes of the soul. Disinterestedness is that single eye which fills the whole body with light. It sees all things in their true relations and according to their proper value. It draws the line of demarkation between good men and bad men. It fixes the great gulf between heaven and hell. It marks the eternal distinction between the Son of God and the great adversary of men. It forms the splendor of redemption and the glory of all the attributes of God. Substitute selfishness in its place and there is no virtue, no heaven, no Savior, no God. It is, in fine, the great moral force of the universe, giving motion and direction, power and value to every good-willing being. He who surrenders himself intelligently and voluntarily to this great principle lifts his whole nature at once and forever. He no longer needs particular rules and detailed prescriptions. He is a law unto himself, obeying all laws in one, without feeling subjection to any; a freeman of the universe, admitted into fellowship with all goodness. Placed within the sphere of his invisible relations, under those great ideas immortality, futurity, eternity, he grows without limit and expands without end. Disinterestedness acts at the very source of his manhood through all his powers and in all directions; upward through his reason, his conscience, his affections, on a plane through his social instincts and faculties, and down-

ward through his appetites and passions; guiding each faculty aright, controlling and raising the whole man, starting into life powers before unused and dormant, and lifting him from the ground, puts him in possession of his true self, and inspires him with a just sense of his immortal value.

Now the mass of men do not put themselves under this high influence. So far from this that they are scarcely willing to understand it. Living and acting by no other force than the selfish principle, they seek the ground, love the ground, refuse to rise from the ground, until its degrading rule is broken. This ennobling affection sets him free from the reign of his groundling faculties, and enables him to live and act according to his higher nature. This takes the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes; strips the rags and infamy from the prodigal and reinstates him in his high relationship. The principle also upturns and reconstructs his practical views respecting the nature of his own happiness. It turns them from the pursuit of outward good for the sake of self-enjoyment, to seek his happiness in the happiness of others. But again we may remark that

III. The principle of the text tends in its influence to remove all that degrades man, or that hinders his moral progress.

It enjoins a benevolent mutuality that rises into oneness, pure brotherhood, strong fellow-feeling of man with man, aiming to develop the entire social state. Unlike the folly of selfishness, which is the negation of humanity, and which has labored for centuries to make the divergent lines of society meet in a single point, it first converges the lines, and thus solves the social problem. And here it is that all speculative philanthropy is so much at fault. Its highest aspirations go no farther than the mere outward condition, or at most to his social and intellectual progress. It would satisfy man's nature by providing him with a new bed or a better habitation, or with the poor dry fare of equal rights or popular liberty. Good as all these are in their place, and important as is their value, it leaves his moral nature entirely uncared for. Man does not live by bread alone, by books alone, or by liberty alone. What God intends is not one but all of these; else you might as easily stay his hunger with a bible, or the pangs of conscience with a loaf. Satisfy his appetites only, and you make him a contented animal. Satisfy his social instincts and faculties, and you make him a piece of complacent or polished selfishness. Satisfy his intellect, and you make him a cold, transparent icicle. But satisfy his moral nature, and you make him a man—a man, too, in the full use of all his faculties, and enriched with untold treasures of truth and right. For this, nothing is equal but the divine principle of the text. Before its quickening energy every evil in soci-



ety, however vast, ponderous, and discouraging, will in the end entirely disappear.

It will revolutionize the whole system of business relations which now keeps down and retards the moral progress of man. It will solve that deepest of all questions, the relations of the employer and employed. Trade, commerce, labor, with their multiplied fruits, will not inure only to the benefit of the few. The high moral claims of the mass, now overborne or set at naught by skill, capital, and position, will no longer be ignored or stinted in the ordinary measure of justice. Private interest will no longer countervail the general interests of humanity. The benign operation of benevolence will harmonize every antagonism. Moral interests will be elevated in value above the material interests of labor. Man will be prized above a bale of cotton or a ton of coal. It will bend the system to the rights and interests of each rather than bend man under the pressure of an unequal system. The world then will learn how much humanity has been kept back in its progress by the operation of this sad and single inequality. The subject only admits of an allusion. To discuss it would require volumes. Again, it would lift the veil of ignorance from the face of the nations. This evil is closely allied to the former. A system of labor which requires a constant battle for the common necessities of life leaves but little leisure for the cultivation of the intellect or of morals. A general waste of mind comes as a consequence from the general waste of time and strength. The reflection is one of the most depressing that can weigh upon the heart of a good man, that so fearful an amount of mind is suffered to run to waste in the laborious acquisition of a wealth that never flows into the channel of benevolence, and that leads to little or no substantial benefit to the vast interests of humanity. Man employs his wealth to pour darkness on the pathway of man. Man harnesses man to his car of gain, and the only reward bestowed is the crust that he eats or the rough garment he wears. His mind, his improvable, immortal mind, is so seldom the object of thought that its existence almost passes without recognition. Benevolence would adjust all this. It would lead to the instruction and improvement of the ignorant. It would invite the weak to lean on the arm of the strong. It will make man feel the degradation of man as he feels his own degradation. Again, it will destroy the blinding and degrading evil of party spirit. When men are swayed by its influence, and not by their own independent judgment, it is one of the most certain means of degradation. Like the heated wind from the desert, party spirit withers and scorches all that is genial and just, humane and honorable, amongst men, and when it sweeps with its accustomed violence through a nation, it often prostrates manhood and principle and worth and character and talent in its course of ruin. Few things utter so

severe a reproach against the intelligence and self-respect of a nation as the silent submission to such perilous visitations. A great people in the spasm of a universal excitement, raised by the profligate and the vile to exalt one of their number to a position he can never fill, is a sight humiliating in the extreme. The honorable loss of a nation's independence could not be more vitiating in its influence. The principle of the text is a sufficient remedy. Governments never reform morals. That is the work of religion only. Influence men by its heaven-born spirit, and how speedily will they refuse to be borne along by the fiery tempest. Let the good favor and promote the good, and soon, like other reforms that spring from religious principle, a government will arise as calm and self-respectful in dignity as strong in peace and stability, and man, instead of seeking to degrade or dishonor his kind, will seek to advance him to dignity and honor.

The same spirit will revolutionize the administration of governments. Governments, more than any other institutions of earth, are founded for the mutual good of its members. And were they administered with only a moderate regard to the welfare of man, they would prove the highest of our earthly blessings. But hitherto it seems to have been the design of the great men and rulers of the world to maintain such a state of things as would keep men in the lowest state of development. They seem to have been influenced by the fear that to trust the masses with their just and appropriate rights would render them difficult to govern. Man has, on this account, been curtailed in his rights and in the use of those means which God has provided for the perfection of his manhood. The moral forces of society have been so employed as to deprive them of their natural energy. The best good of man—his highest social and intellectual and moral welfare—have been set aside for lesser and inferior objects. The great, elevating principle of the Bible has been thus far wholly unrecognized. Could it be brought to bear in its influence on our civil life, a transformation more wonderful than the world has ever witnessed would appear in every act and every measure. Equality of rights and privileges would be enjoyed without question or controversy. Justice and equity would inspire every heart and give vigor to every hand. That fearful antagonism which now jars and jostles the great machinery of government, and which often destroys nations in its collisions, will settle down more speedily than if the combined wisdom and talent of the world were employed for their removal. Governments would become families, and nations brotherhoods; moral influence and moral principle be more valued than material interests, and material interests increased in a thousandfold proportion. Let the influence of this benign principle control but a few of the common aspects of society—let it enter the common employments of life, guide the ways of business,

regulate the pursuit of wealth, make property a means of beneficence instead of private enjoyment, wield power for the weal and not for the woe of man, and the scenes that now sadden the well-wishers of the race will change into scenes of delight and beauty. Society itself would bud and blossom and fill the face of the world with fruit. Corrupt governments would sink; the thrones whose worm-eaten pillars now tremble at the popular breath would fall, never again to be reëstablished; the madness and corruption of party spirit be known only in the abhorrence of history; rebellion, that whirlwind of Satan, treason, that breathing-hole of the pit, find no place for their revels but in the domains of the lost.

The same spirit will overturn all false systems of religion. The clear, strong light of manly principle will bring to naught every doctrine and form and notion and service that comes in conflict with the best good of man. Benevolence and not selfish principle, love and not fear, will form the self-convicting test of all religion. Superstition, formality, religious pride, and heartless ceremony will appear in their natural incompatibility with truth and right. Sincerity and fervor, truth and zeal, heartfulness and trusting affection will form the badge of true discipleship. In honor one will prefer another; in love one will serve another, and thus the whole body will be firmly compacted by every fitting joint and ligament.

IV. Disobedience to the principle of the text is opposition to the real welfare of humanity.

For if the value of man, if his augmentation and improvement, if the removal of those evils that impede his advancement, are all dependent on the practical manifestation of this spirit, what, it may well be asked, is the just inference to be drawn from the exhibition of the opposite spirit? Certainly it is not that selfish principle is innocent or venial, or that it injures no one but its guilty subject, or that it extends no farther than to the narrow sphere in which it operates; but that it is in effect and reality that opposing influence that tends to swell the universal tide of wrong, to restrain and hold back the universal advancement of man, to support and perpetuate the universal reign of evil—in a word, to place the whole welfare of man and the vast interests of God's kingdom on the descending plane of degradation and ruin. It is morally certain that if all men were to act on the reversed principle of this divine law, and instead of God's reading, read it according to their common views and common practice—let every man seek his own and not another's welfare—the empire of darkness would be as firmly established as if the government of the world were handed over to the Prince of Darkness. Were all men to act on the selfish principle, there would be no more good in the

world than appears in his lower kingdom. The dominion of evil would be fixed and firm; crime would tread on the heels of crime until the standard of revolt might be raised in the very heavens, and the shoreless universe heave through eternity the ever-rolling surges of misery and woe. And this would be the fruit of selfishness. Disobedience to God's fundamental statute is no trifle. All the good in heaven and upon earth is dependent on its cordial recognition. It is so essential to the life and existence of both, that all the evils under which earth now labors will never remove until it becomes the reigning principle of human nature, as it is now the reigning principle of His law. War will not cease its desolations, oppression will not lift its heavy hand, restless dissatisfaction, agitating antagonism, distressful revolution, governmental ruin, will never die, until the pregnant cause of all shall die before them. That cause is not outward, but inward—in the heart and not in the circumstances or condition. Leave man's heart untouched, leave it to the unbroken influence of the selfish principle, and the same scenes will ever recur, to be reenacted for the same reasons. Man will prey on his fellow, and the entire race be left to run its phrenzied and fruitless round, without attaining the object for which the great and blessed One has gifted him with existence. This, so far, has been man's foolish course. It may continue for as long a period. But longer or shorter, the miseries of the world are the direct product of his disobedience to the benevolent principle. And they who voluntarily, causelessly disobey it, throw themselves in opposition to the well-being of humanity at large, and make themselves accessories to the evils which they may profess to deplore.

V. The Church of Christ is the only source of hope for the universal welfare of man.

The Christian church is founded on the principle of benevolence. It is its living, breathing spirit; and its great design is to manifest that spirit to the world. Outside of the Church of Christ there is no institution that regards man as man, or that attempts to care for the great wants of man. There, and there only, man is estimated according to his real and proper worth, and according to his high relations, visible and invisible. There, and there alone, man is acknowledged in all his rights, natural and moral. There, and there alone, man finds the only means for his instruction and improvement, his direction and elevation. There, and there only, he is secure from oppression. There all temporary distinctions fade and die away. There his true brotherhood is acknowledged in all its fullness. There the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the ignorant and the educated, the foreigner and the native, the black and the white, meet on a common ground; one in humanity, in rights, in privileges, and in common destiny. There

all have one common home, one common Savior, one common God and Father. There is neither Jew there, nor Greek there; there is neither barbarian nor Scythian there; neither bond nor free there; but all fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God, bound together in one high, living, and enduring relationship.

This is the true and literal character of the Church of Christ. There may be those within its sacred fold who carry there the principles of the world with them; but they are not allowed there. There may be churches in name that deny the great fundamental principles of the Gospel; but they are not the churches of Christ. There may be imperfections, wrongs, and even oppression in some of its branches; but they exist there under the condemnation of its Supreme Head. In comparison with the divine principle no other doctrine, form, ceremony, service, or mode of discipline is of any account. Let it be apostolic or non-apostolic, orthodox or heterodox, glowing with zeal or frozen in torpidity, it is all accounted as nothing, as the sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. This underlies and gives value to all—its animating principle, its moving power, its crowning glory. Otherwise it is the body without the spirit. Were this single influence what it might easily be, and what it should be, it would not be long before men would enjoy their dearest rights and be raised to their highest state of development. And what is demanded for this but the full practical recognition of its power in every branch and in every section of the professed Church of Christ? Let it once sway its membership, and how soon would heart flow into heart, and that scene of universal peace and charity foretold by the prophet open upon the rejoicing vision of all. Self-seeking would fly from her boundaries, the covetous man and the extortioner be at once excluded from Christian intercourse and fellowship. Union and concord cement the true friends of the Redeemer and of man. Unessential and divisive differences die under the concentrated rays of light and love, and man, the well-being of universal man, be the moving spring of Christian energy. The blessed influence of the church would extend to the wider field of the world. Social evils would be removed or reformed. The measures and aims of civil government all run in the pure channels of wisdom and rectitude. Humanity displace outrage and oppression. The social state be controlled by the upright and the honorable, and all men form a common bulwark of right and justice, and one joy in the welfare of another, and each in the welfare of the whole. Then will the Church of Christ become that colossal man, complete in every member, and well-developed in every part, informed with divine intelligence, moved by a divine influence; and without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, prove itself the body of Him whose fullness filleth all in all.



## SERMON XVI.\*

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### GOD'S MOST REASONABLE DEMAND PRESSED UPON THE SINNER.

"My son, give me thine heart."—PROVERBS, 23 : 26.

It is a plea often offered by impenitent men for their neglect of religion, that there are mysteries in it which they can not fathom. Be it so, that there are mysteries beyond the comprehension of Gabriel; there are truths and commands which a child can understand and a child may obey. And while the salvation of the soul does not depend on an understanding of the one, it does on an obedience to the other. What command more simple and intelligible than this: "My son, give me thine heart?" And yet a compliance with it is the sum of all true religion, and secures salvation. In behalf of God, and for your own sakes, I urge it upon you, my impenitent hearers. God says to you, in infinite tenderness and majesty: "My son, give me thine heart." I would show what is meant by giving God the heart, and notice a few things which are implied in this demand.

I have asked, What is more simple and intelligible? Let this be the command of a parent to a rebellious child, and no one would think of asking for an explanation. But as the command of God to the sinner, many have veiled it in mystery, supposing the heart to be something over which the individual has no control; and hence we find many saying, "I would give God my heart if I could," as though the heart was something distinct from the desire, the choice, the purpose of the man. The term heart, as used in relation to the moral man, is a metaphor drawn from the seat of animal life; that delicate organ through which the blood flows and which imparts action to the system. And it is a metaphor which most forcibly presents the preference of the soul, the choice, the disposition, the act of the will, which constitutes moral character. Now, to give God the heart is nothing more nor less than to place on him the affections; or, in more intelligible language, to love him. Thus one individual gives to another his heart when he becomes sincerely and deeply attached to him; and thus man gives God his heart, when he truly says: "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth I desire

\* Preached in a time of a great revival.

besides thee." This, surely, all can understand. This, all may feel.

I proceed to notice a few things relative to yourself, my impenitent hearer, clearly implied in this demand.

I. It is implied in this demand that, from the earliest moments of your being, you have withheld from God your heart.

God would not demand of you what you had already surrendered to him. He would not say to Gabriel: "My son, give me thine heart." If he should, Gabriel might ask in reply: "Lord, why dost thou make this demand? Thou knowest that my heart is and ever has been thine; thou knowest that I love thee." Let God make this demand of Satan, and there is a meaning and a force in it; for Satan is a rebel, and has for ages turned away his heart from God. And this demand made of you shows where you are; that your heart in like manner is alienated from God, and placed upon some other, some unhallowed object.

Do you deny this? Then why does God make the demand? Do you ask for evidence of it? What evidence would satisfy you that a child had become alienated from its parent? what other than this, that it had ceased to think of him; that when it did think of him, the thought was painful; that it fled from his presence, sought no intercourse, refused to read his letters, trifled with his name, and disobeyed his commandments? Is not all this true of you? Let conscience answer. Let the record of your life testify. Consult the Bible and see what, from the beginning, has been the character of the race to which you belong. What did God say of the antediluvian world, and why did he destroy that world? What was his complaint against his own people? "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." What said Jeremiah of the natural heart? It is "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." What Paul of the carnal mind? It is "enmity with God." Are you an exception—one out of the millions of the human family who does not withhold his affections from God? If so, why then have you not perfectly obeyed him? As a transgressor of his law, the evidence is complete against you. And yet I fear it is the last proposition to which you will assent. Amid all the ravings of rebellion, and while tossing on the billows of the fiery gulf, you will deny that you are a rebel, or, at least, that you are voluntary in your alienation, and will persist in affirming that you would love God if you could. I pray that the Holy Spirit may now fasten conviction of this great truth on your mind, that God shall not speak in vain.

II. It is implied in this demand that God has a right to your heart.

Wicked men often claim what is not their own, and we are not surprised. But does a righteous man present a claim, we feel that it is lawfully his. But can God trespass upon another's? What is another's? What are we? What are any? What have we all, that we have not received?

God, sinner, has a right to your heart for what he is in himself. Do you ask why, and what is God? All that is excellent and glorious; the King eternal, immortal, invisible, before whom cherubim and seraphim cast their crowns, crying: "Holy! Holy! Holy! Lord God Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory!"

But more. God has a right to your heart from what he has done for you. Look at yourself, your wonderful frame, your physical and moral capacities, your immortal mind. Look around you and above you, at the world you inhabit, at all its conveniences and wonders, at the firmament over you, the light, the air, the ten thousand productions in the animal and vegetable kingdoms—all made for you, and all claiming your adoration and love.

God has a right to your heart for his patience and forbearance toward you. Think, for a moment, how many years you have withheld from him the tribute of your affections; how you have trampled under foot his authority and abused his grace; how you have cast off fear and restrained prayer; how you have neglected his word and violated his Sabbaths; how you have abused his mercies to sin; and how, when for every transgression he might justly have cut you off in his anger, he has permitted you to live, and not only to live, but has loaded you with mercies. And does he deserve no grateful return? Deny it, if you can. But another and higher thought. God has given his Son, his only begotten and beloved Son, to die for you; has opened for you the way of life, that you may escape from death, and has stooped from his eternal throne to enter into covenant with you, that neither life nor death, principalities nor powers, things present nor things to come, shall separate you from his love. Oh! riches of grace! Mercies inexhaustible!

"But if I must give my heart to supreme excellence, or bestow my affection on him who has done most for me, my liberty is abridged; I am not mine own master; another has dominion over me."

But what if you should bestow it upon one who has no rightful claim—would you have more freedom? Would not another be your master; even one whose wages would be death? Oh! boasted liberty! the liberty of descending to death and hell.

III. It is implied in the demand of the text that you can give God your heart. Just as much as that you have a heart, or that God speaks, or that you are his son. On any other supposition

than this, the whole exhortation would be without meaning; would be taunting irony. Nor on any other would there be duty incumbent on you, as duty is measured by the command of God and ability to obey.

"But my ability to do a right thing was lost in the fall."

What constitutes an ability to do a right thing, but an understanding, a power to know God, to know his revealed will, the rule of your duty with all its reasonableness; a conscience, a moral sense, a discernment of right and wrong; a power of choice, of preference of one course over another? Are not these all yours—yours in the very highest degree? Deny it, if you can. Your own mouth would condemn you.

"But all inclination for the love of God is departed!" Very true; and this is the reason why God says: "My son, give me thine heart." But inclination is something very different from capacity. Suppose a man has capacity but no inclination to obey the laws of the land? What then? Is he under no obligations to obey them? May he plead his inclination to do wrong as an excuse for doing wrong? Was not this the very point for which the prophet so sharply rebuked the Jews when he said: "Will ye steal, and murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not, and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?"

"But how can I love God when my mind is carnal, at enmity with him. I would if I could, but I can not. The Divine Savior says I can not, except the Father draws me."

But, my friend, the Savior does not say you can not if the Father draws you. And if you can come and love God and obey the Savior when the Father draws you, then you have all the powers of moral agency; the very point I am arguing. And does not the Father draw you? Has he not been doing it all your days, and have you not been continually pulling away the shoulder and saying, The world shall be my portion? And now will you look up and say, I can not give God my heart?

Perhaps, however, you have no clear views of what is actually required of you. It is not that you should do something which you would be glad to do, but can not; as you would be glad to relieve a person in distress, but have no ability or means; or would be glad to redeem a soul from hell, but can give no ransom. God says: "My son, give me thine heart." And what does he mean by this? Precisely the same as if he had said: "My son, love me. My daughter, love me. To me consecrate yourself for time and eternity." That is all. And now do you say: "I can not love God; can not consecrate myself to him?" Why? What evil hath he done? What is there in his character or service re-

pulsive to your feelings? Do you say: "Nothing; the evil lies, all lies, in the wickedness of my heart itself?" Oh! then, as you freely confess it, so repent of it, mourn over it; cast yourself down before a forsaken God; tell him what a wretch you have been; implore forgiveness through the blood of his Son, with the aids of his Holy Spirit, to work in you a better temper. For thus saith the Lord: "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby you have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit. Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I pour out my Spirit upon you." Do what you can, and what you should, and live.

IV. It is implied in this demand that God is now ready to receive you.

There is one abuse of the truth which I have just presented, peculiar to the deceitful heart. Perhaps already, my still impenitent hearer, you have been guilty of it. You may have said to yourself: "Well, if it is so that I can give God my heart at any moment, when I please, I will delay it for the present. The world may yet longer be my idol. If my heart is his before I die, that will be sufficient." Is it so? Let me remind you of that solemn passage: "Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer. They shall seek me early and shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel. They despised all my reproof." Esau sold his birthright, but he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. You can at any time give your heart to God, and therefore you ought to do it at this moment of time; but it is also true that you are so depraved, so alienated from God, so under the power of your own pride and self-gratification that you never will do it without the grace of God to subdue you; and the least delay, under the circumstances under which you are placed, may lead him forever to give you to the power of your corruptions. Through the death of his Son, God is now ready, and I venture to say my text warrants it, to receive you. Without an atonement there could be no reconciliation. Never, no, never, could rebel man approach his Creator. To all the wicked God would forever be a consuming fire. But lo! he has had compassion. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whoso believeth in him should not perish, but might have everlasting life." God may now be just, just to himself, just to his law and all holy beings, and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus. And therefore he says: "My son, give me thine heart." "Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning, and turn to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful and of great kindness." Yea, like the father of the repenting prodigal he will run and meet you. It is no light thing, sinner, that God is now ready



to receive you. All has been purchased by heaven's greatest, choicest gift. But though all things are now ready, soon the door will be shut. Soon the day of mercy will be clean gone forever. Do I say that death will be the boundary beyond which God will be irreconcilable? Ah! It may lie far this side of that. "O Jerusalem! Jerusalem! how often would I have gathered you as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate." The day of merciful visitation soon passes.

"While God invites, how blessed the day,  
How sweet the Gospel's charming sound;  
Come, sinners, haste, O haste away  
While yet a pardoning God he's found."

Shall I not add, then,

Fifthly, That it is implied in the demand and in all the considerations which I have placed before you, that you are called to make an immediate surrender.

"What? While I am in this house, sitting on these seats, hearing this sermon?"

Yes; for if God has a right to your heart, he has a right to it now. If you can ever render it, you should render it now. If this is the moment in which he is ready to receive you, this should be the moment of your return.

"But I did not expect to do it when I came into this house."

And, said a young man, thrown from a horse, and suddenly hurried into eternity: "I did not expect to die to-day." But he was called to. And how much better unexpectedly become a Christian, than unexpectedly die and perish forever.

"But I do not know about submitting to God so suddenly. I must have time. Conversion is not a hasty but a gradual work."

How much time do you want? How much have you had? How long has God called and you refused—stretched out his hand and you have not regarded? What if you were sailing swift down Niagara's flood; would you ask for time to turn? What if your house was wrapped in flames; would you talk of a gradual escape? What do you mean by a gradual conversion? Can a man gradually stop fighting? fire a few more guns as the war is over? gradually exchange his enmity to love? oppose God to-day, only not so violently as yesterday, and with less and less bitterness as time rolls on? What would become of the soul, halting in the process? Whose would it be, God's or Satan's? Sinner! God now commands you to repent. As the Roman ambassadors drew a circle around the captive princes and bade them accede to their terms before they had passed its bounds, so God now requires an immediate accession to his overtures of mercy.

Perhaps you say: "I have tried often and often to give my heart to God and been unable."

And how have you tried? Just as a man has tried to serve two masters. You have tried to give up your heart to God, while you have continued to give it to the world. Your partner, or child, or house, or gold, or honor, has been your idol, or you have cloven to some forbidden sin and refused to cut off the right hand, or to pluck out the right eye. No wonder you have failed; and try in this way you may forever, and at last make your bed in hell. How will your heart ever fasten upon God, until you renounce every other object of affection?

"But I have no conviction and no realization of my entire alienation from God, and how without that can I yield myself to him alive from the dead?"

No conviction! No realization! Can you lay your hand on your heart and say this? Are you not struggling this moment against convictions more distressing than you can bear; laboring to conceal it from a scrutinizing world; more willing to have it said that your heart is so hard, so unbelieving, that all that God can do, all the blood and sufferings of Christ, and the very prospect of an eternal destruction has no effect upon you, than that you are under conviction and alarmed at your state; rather be called a stupid, hardened atheist and infidel than an anxious, inquiring sinner? What will you think of this pride when your flesh and your body are consumed; of this careful concealment of your true character and these resistances of the Spirit of God? O my still impenitent hearer, God once more says to you in infinite kindness and compassion: "My son, give me thine heart." Refuse, and how shall you escape his wrath and curse? Do what else you will; be moral in your life, sober in your conversation, chaste in your thoughts, honest in your intercourse with your fellow men, regular in your attendance on the forms of religion, give all your goods to feed the poor and your body to be burned, without love you can not enter heaven. Never, no, never, can you praise and enjoy God; never stand in the "light of his countenance." Hell must be your abode; weeping and wailing your portion.

"But God is merciful."

True; and therefore you are spared, and God is saying: "My son, give me thine heart." For though all your sins were blotted out, without love you could not live in heaven. You could not dwell a moment there while withholding yourself from him that sitteth on the throne. Here you have happiness in the objects around you; in acquiring wealth; in moving, perhaps, in a wide circle of friends; in the gratification of appetite; in the pride of life. But in death, the world, with all that is gratifying to a wicked man, passes away. Riches he must leave behind; sensual pleasures come to an end; honor, pomp, pride perish in the dust. So the rich man found it. He had withheld his heart from God, and rioted

in the bounties of his providence. But he died and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, without one drop of water to cool his tongue tormented in the flame. Thus was it with him; and you are now to decide whether thus it shall be with you. Are you aged, with one foot in the grave, within sound of the groans of the lost; how precious the moment! Are you young, in the spring season of life, unhardened, uncommitted to an eternal alienation, within the precious promise: "I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me." Unto you, O man, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. Hark! I seem to hear you say:

"Weary of this war within,  
Weary of this endless strife;  
Weary of my-self and sin,  
Weary of a wretched life;

"Burdened with a world of grief,  
Burdened with a sinful load;  
Burdened with my unbelief,  
Burdened with the wrath of God;

"Lo, I come to thee for ease,  
Jesus, gracious as thou art;  
Now my weary soul release,  
Write forgiveness on my heart."  
Father, I have sinned, etc.

"Now, Lord, I would be thine alone,  
Come, take possession of thine own,  
For thou hast set me free;  
Released from Satan's hard command,  
See all my powers in waiting stand  
To be employed by thee."

And is it so? May I leave you reconciled to God? O to grace how great a debtor. "I say unto you there is joy in heaven among the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Oh, the wonders of redeeming love! Oh, the triumphs of the Cross over sin and hell. Give your heart, your all to God, and be blessed forever.

"Sing, ye redeemed of the Lord,  
Your great deliverer sing;  
Pilgrims for Zion's city bound,  
Be joyful in your king.

A hand divine shall lead you on  
Through all the blissful road,  
Till to the sacred mount you rise  
To see your smiling God."

## THE PRAYER-MEETING.

### The Fulton-Street Prayer-Meeting.

THIS consecrated spot continues the home of prayer, the house of prayer, the place where it would seem God delights to hear and answer the petitions of his praying ones. Here, the citizen, the stranger, the merchant, and business-man from a distance, the soldier and officer from the army or navy, the sailor and sea-captain from their ocean voyages, come with warm hearts and deep emotion to tell how God has heard their prayers, and what he has done for their souls.

At a recent meeting a young soldier arose to speak. His words were few, but his heart seemed full. "He had come to thank God publicly," he said, "for his goodness." A short time since he asked the prayers of the meeting, that he might be kept while away in camp. Those prayers had been answered. God had kept him, and he was here to give the glory to Him.

"I have come again," said an aged sea-captain in the meeting, "to tell once more the same old story. Surely I can say, I rejoice in God, the Rock of my salvation. It is now four years and eight months since I was born into the kingdom of God's dear Son: 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' This verse," he adds, "and particularly the latter clause, just suits my case exactly. I rejoice that I was born a second time. Like the woman of Samaria

who left her water-pot and went into the city to tell the people of Christ—so must I say I will leave all to sing the praises of the Lord. I am now sixty-three years old. But since I was born the last time I have rejoiced each day in the Rock of my salvation."

Prayers having been requested for the conversion of two brothers on the battle field; the speedy conversion of a woman sick and near to death; and for the blessing of God to rest on a Sabbath-school in New-Jersey, an army chaplain led in prayer, remembering these with much earnestness. He prayed for the wounded on the battle-field; the sick in hospitals and camps; the poor wandering colored people in our city, many of whom were God's believing, humble children, who were cast out and homeless; and he prayed with great fervor for our distracted country—that the God of battles would guide our generals in the field, and that the Gospel of Christ would go forth with our armies.

On another occasion, one who had been converted through the influence of the meetings arose to speak. It was about a year and a half since he had sought his happiness at the foot of the cross—and here he found it truly. He added: "I always expect to be happy, because I always intend to do the will of God." He had spent some time of late in Convalescent Camp, Virginia. He found there a great outpouring of God's Spirit. He had seen in the frequent meetings

held there from day to day, some thirty, forty, and fifty gathered around the altar, at a time, for prayers. He found a noble work going on there under the auspices of the Christian Commission. They had built a large chapel, but it was not sufficient to accommodate all who would attend. The soldiers gathered together in multitudes, morning, noon, and night, for prayer; and long after the evening services were closed, they would go out into the woods and pray for hours, evening after evening; and as he listened he could hear the frequent shouts of "Glory to God." There are many Christians there who are laboring to win souls to Christ. But it is a great work to carry on these meetings from week to week. Pray that God's Spirit may constantly descend, and bless these efforts in behalf of the soldiers.

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For the Prayer-Meeting.

#### A Sabbathless World.

How dreary and death-like would the world become without a Sabbath! Its workshops would resemble the wards of some mighty hospital, tenanted by the pining victims of intense toil. Manhood would, in one or two generations, lose all its characteristic strength; youth would be smitten with a fatal blight, ere it had half attained its growth; and hale old age would become a prodigy to be wondered at in the land.

"Yokefellows! think how the abstraction of the Sabbath would hopelessly enslave the working classes with whom we are identified. Think of labor thus going on in one monotonous and eternal cycle—the limbs forever on the rack—the fingers forever plying, the eyeballs forever straining—the

brow forever sweating—the feet forever plodding—the brain forever throbbing—the shoulders forever drooping—the loins forever aching—and the restless mind forever scheming. Think, as your imagination beholds the unvarying wheel of work, the treadmill of labor thus going round, and round, and round; without a change, without a pause; from morn to night, and from year to year—think, if you can, of the desolations that must follow this absolute reign of labor, over the whole realm of time. Think of the beauty it would efface; of the merry-heartedness it would extinguish; of the giant-strengths that it would tame; of the resources of nature that it would exhaust; of the aspirations it would crush; of the sicknesses that it would breed; of the projects it would wreck; of the groans that it would extort; of the lives that it would immolate; and of the cheerless graves that it would prematurely dig! See them toiling and mowing, sweating and fretting, grinding and hewing, weaving and spinning, strewing and gathering, sowing and reaping, razing and building, digging and planting, unlading and storing, striving and struggling; in the garden and in the field, in the granary and in the barn, in the factory and in the mill, in the warehouse and in the shop, on the mountain and in the ditch, on the road-side and in the wood, in the city and in the country, on the sea and on the shore, on the earth and in the earth; in days of brightness and days of gloom; in hours of sun and seasons of storm; in times of trouble and times of peace; in the heights of day and in the depths of night; through the savageness of winter and through the gentleness of spring; in the energy of



youth and in the impotence of age; when health is dancing in the blood, and when disease is eating up the strength; when death is in the lonely home, and when happy life encircleth the hearth;—thus the wheel of labor would go round with the earth, and the children of industry chained to its surface must follow its ruinous circumvolutions till, exhausted by unnatural efforts, they relax their hold, drop off, and suddenly disappear.

"The worn-out wayfarer, finding no verdant resting-place, and no house of entertainment to cheer him in his travel, must sink at length on the road-side, and miserably perish. The delicate and the fragile would be speedily 'crushed,' by such a doom, 'before the moth.' Feeble constitutions, that with a seventh day's fostering care, might eke out their residue of strength for many years, would be broken down with a sudden crash. Incipient diseases, which nature, invigorated by adequate rest, might overgrow, would be developed with a deadly rapidity. An intense labor would be found a dreadful forcer of the seeds and rudiments of decay, which are embedded, more or less plentifully, in all of us. Under the vassalage of such a gigantic oppressor as unrestricted labor, earth would reek with the sufferings of her offspring; whilst the all-absorbing prayer of her millions would be for 'Rest! Rest! Rest!' or the quiet slumber of the grave!"

For the Prayer-Meeting.

#### Grace in a Gradual Revelation.

THERE is another point in which you may see God's grace in the revelation of his plan of salvation—the way in which he revealed it in primitive times in types and

symbols. Now, if you were to come into the school-room of this chapel when the day-school is in operation, you might find the teachers giving "object lessons"—taking objects, and from those visible objects drawing out all sorts of lessons for the children. When you want to teach children you don't often make use of abstractions, but you get pictures. You can't get on well with children without appealing to their senses. You get pictures and diagrams; and that is a very wise way of teaching. Now, have you never thought what the use of the Book of Leviticus is? It is God Almighty's object lesson of the Gospel. It is God Almighty teaching there by pictures. The very same things that are taught you in plainer truths, are taught there in symbols, and in visible forms; and, mind you, I don't think there ever was an age of the world in which that Book of Leviticus was of more importance than it is to-day. You have to-day a great many men who would like to have a Gospel without a cross—who would like to have a Gospel without an altar—who would like to have a Gospel minus an atonement. They will say very fine things about Christ being a pattern, about Christ living divinely, and dying divinely, as a sort of ensample for you; but while they would keep the cross of Christ as a sort of trophy, they would not keep the cross of Christ as the altar upon which atonement was made. I will tell you what is one of the best refutations of the theory of these men who garble the Scriptures in these times—that old Book of Leviticus. I will defy any man, holding that modern principle of what is called "Negative Theology," to make common sense of the Mosaic institute.

What did God mean when he ordained that remarkable set of institutions? Here you have lambs slaughtered by thousands—a costly institute. Do you think that God wanted his priests to be butchers, and his temple to be a shamble? Do you think that he wanted the blood of bullocks, and of goats? What does it all mean? If every lamb were not a picture of that true Lamb, if every priest were not a type of that true Priest, if that whole temple service did not relate to the Gospel, and if every part of it did not point to Calvary, what sense can you find in it at all? I will defy any man with those common and popular notions, to make common sense at all, of that old Mosaic institution; so that to-day it is just as important as it was in old time. It is God Almighty's own picture-lesson, in which the Gospel is set up in pictures for everybody to see it.

For the Prayer-Meeting.

#### Neglecting Salvation.

SUPPOSE that there had been during the time of the great fire at Moscow, when that city was burnt down, some miserly wretch up at the top story of some tall house; and there that miser is looking over his ledgers. There is great trouble in the town, but all he cares about is his ledgers and his gold bags that he has got about him. It is a miserable-looking room up there, but there is a good deal of gold in it for all that. He has got his gold bags and his wealth about him, and his precious goods are stored in all sorts of crannies in that room. While that old man is up there with his gold bags and his ledgers an alarm has begun to resound through the streets—"Fire! fire! fire!" and the alarm

bells are ringing in all directions, and everybody is trying to escape; but that old man never listens to the alarm bells—he is too busy calculating his profits; he is too busy with his books and his bags, and he never listens to the alarm. Everybody is running but that old man, and there is he busy with his gold; and while he is counting his cash the fire takes hold of the very staircase of his house, and it is creeping up the stairs from chamber to chamber till at last it is burning the very joists of the floor on which he stands, and by-and-by crash goes the very floor, and in he sinks to a burning, fiery tomb. You see he neglected the alarm. Ah! that is very like the worldling. We go and tell him of danger, and we tell him of salvation. You know if you go and stand by a blacksmith's smithy and you talk to him, he is so busy with the sound of his hammers that he can't hear what you say, and he keeps on hammering in spite of all your remarks, and does not hear a word. So it is with the busy worldling. He is so hard at work with the toils of life, and his heart is so set on the things of the world, that say what you will he never listens to you, and it is as if he never heard you. Why, there are many men that have been surrounded by Gospel teaching for I can't tell how many years, and they are as blind and as dark as if they never heard it. Busy with the din of their worldliness about them they never seemed to hear the message. They neglected the great salvation. They did not deny it; they did not say that there was not a salvation; they did not say they would not be saved; but they just left the matter alone—they neglected it. Now if you neglect this great salvation you will perish.

For the Prayer-Meeting.

### Lessons of the Grave.

O GRAVE! how many sighs hast thou drawn from the hearts, how many tears from the eyes of those who have been thy visitors! But these sighs and tears were for the good of mortals. "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." Many are those who, when they have sat beneath the cypress or willow, that waved over the grave of a friend, have vowed to prepare for the eventful hour of death. There is something in the sighing of the winds that moan over, and in the rustling of the grass that waves around the tomb, which speaks to the hearts of the living, and brings to memory every dearly-cherished look and action of our departed associates. The solemnity which they inspire carries us back into the past, to the hour when they left cares and pains for happiness and glory—dying mortals, for God and angels; and prompts us to emulate their virtuous examples, that we may share their glory. We do not wish that the gloomy countenance, and tearful eye, should always be the portion of mortals; but we would gladly see these signals of repenting sorrow upon the countenances of those who have hitherto been thoughtless and vain.

And if the future destiny of man cannot be learned from those places of the dead, we may well fear that human sympathy cannot be acted upon for the good of dying men. But a feeling is awakened in the Christian's heart, of a

different character from that of sadness, when he beholds the devastations of the "King of Terrors," and looks upon the victims of his conquest. He fears not to meet this mighty conqueror. He knows that death and the grave cannot hold him captive. His Commander has "burst the bars of death and triumphed o'er the grave," and all his followers will be equally victorious! The Christian knows that when he is counted as dead—that when the storms of earth hasten to decay the monumental slab which is reared over his grave, that he will not be there! His faith reaches beyond the tomb, to a glorious land whose inhabitants never die. A land where no graves shall be found, where the wail of the bereaved shall be heard no more.

BELIEVE.—Dr. Johnson could not find the primary meaning, nor the origin of the word *believe*. It was formed from the Gothic *Belifian*, which is something by which a person lives. When a man believes any thing he adapts his life to it. Hence the great significance of this word. When a man professes to believe Christianity, and fails to conform his life to it, he thereby shows that he does not believe what he professes. There are many such persons, to whom Plato's use of the word opinion may be correctly applied. Plato said that "opinion is the half-way house between ignorance and knowledge," and a great many opinions take their final lounge in the dominion of ignorance.